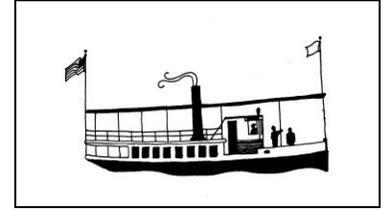


Sunapee Echoes

Sunapee, New Hampshire Historical Society, Inc.
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Winter 2024



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

As I write this, we are still waiting for real winter weather. But frigid temperatures are coming, so the lake may yet freeze over. If anyone sees a loon stranded in a tightening circle of open water, please be sure to call LSPA or the Loon Preservation Committee.

Our Board of Directors is busy planning the events for next summer. The schedule of Thursday night programs is just about set for 11 and 26 July and 8 and 22 August and the topics will include Barbara Chalmers on the ponds of Sunapee (Otter, Ledge, Perkins, and Mountain View Lake), John Dietel on sailing on Lake Sunapee, Kevin Gardner on the art of building stone walls—a NH Humanities-sponsored program, and perhaps Dr. Robert Goodby on the Native American presence in this area. We'll also join with LSPA to present Mary Kronenwetter on Corbin Park—the hunting preserve established by Austin Corbin in Croydon and Newport (date TBD). We expect our history cruises to be on 1 July and 5 August. This year's route will run from north of the Fells past Newbury Harbor, Davis

Cabins, and the State beach to Oak Ledge and Fisher's Bay. Watch for the confirmed schedule in our Spring newsletter.

Barbara Chalmers is hard at work on a book about the histories of those other water bodies in Sunapee for publication in the early summer. And *Stories from the Grave*, postponed from last year, is taking shape for early October.

Recent donations have included two lovely display cases—one for each of our buildings—a souvenir tea set, a number of photos and postcards, and more. Thanks to all the donors! Please think of us when disposing of Sunapee items, and please know that we'd love to add your photos of Sunapee town or school events to our collection. We can scan and return photos or accept them digitally from a flash drive. Thanks!

Enjoy the snow that surely we'll get soon!

Becky Fitts Rylander

In Memoriam.

Since our last newsletter, we have lost three good friends: Marilyn Morse, Priscilla Sargent, and Gordon Ramspott. All were long-time residents of Sunapee who served our town—including our historical society—in many ways.

Marilyn and Priscilla both served as members of our board of directors, but Priscilla's contributions, especially, went well beyond that. As Babe's wife, she was present at our founding 50 years ago and during all his years as our president and more—surely no small gift! We miss Marilyn's smile and the support given so willingly by both of them over the years.

Please see page 2 for a few words on what Gordon's friendship meant to us.

The obituaries of all three can be found on the Chadwick Funeral Home website:

<https://www.chadwickfuneralservice.com/obits>



Did you know?.....

Human beings first appeared in this area 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. Local professor and archaeologist, the late Howard R. Sargent (brother of local artist and marina owner, Babe Sargent) explored several sites in this area from the 1970s to the early 1990s and uncovered much of the evidence for what we know—or think we know—about those early inhabitants.

These early peoples—called Paleo-Indians, the earliest known ancestors of modern Native Americans—showed up as the ice sheet of the last ice age receded to the north. They were most likely hunters and foragers looking for the last of the late Pleistocene era animals such as mammoths and mastodons. Settlements are rarely found, but two were discovered in this area, one in Newbury and one in Georges Mills. The surface of Glacial Lake Sunapee was higher than the modern lake's, and the water drained at its southern end into the Merrimack watershed. The site in Newbury is thought to have been on the shore of the glacial lake.



Howard Sargent by Peter Tria

At the site in Georges Mills, referred to as the Russell's Inn Site (where Sunapee Cove now stands), Professor Sargent held classes in the summertime for several years. There he found evidence that the site had been used by various groups of native Americans through millennia. Paleo-Indian or early Archaic tools were found in undisturbed subsoil closer to the modern lakeshore than at the Newbury site. So perhaps the lake surface fell slowly. This site was in use 8500 years ago. By 6,000 years ago, the climate had changed; Lake Sunapee had fallen to its modern level and drained to the Connecticut River watershed as it does now. The Paleo-Indians had moved north and were replaced by another group of hunters and gatherers of the Middle Archaic era; and by 3,000 years ago, they in turn were replaced by Woodland Indians, a people who, unlike earlier tribes, engaged in some farming as well as hunting and fishing and were potters, leaving behind many potsherds. The site of a wigwam was dated to 1200 CE by the potsherds found in two of its three hearths, left by people who may have been the ancestors of the Abenakis encountered by the European settlers who came to this area in the 18th century. Some of the artifacts were found in soil that had been disturbed by farming or other earth-moving activities, but others were found in undisturbed soil providing more context for their discovery.

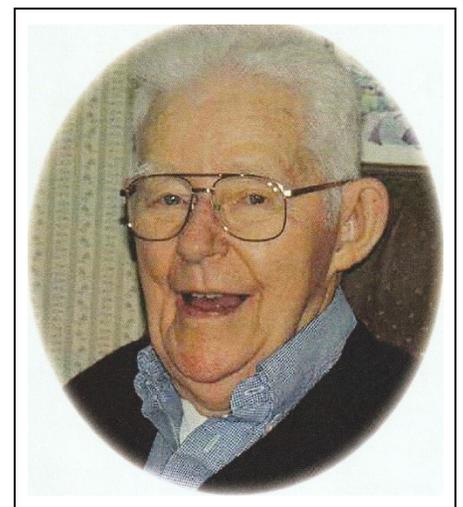
Howard also found artifacts on his own property in Georges Mills at the corner of Rte 11 and Cooper Street. According to an obituary by George Nicholas, when building an extension on his house, Howard found a historic dump and a prehistoric site. It is said that visitors could expect to find themselves with a drink in one hand and a trowel in the other! As you can see, many questions remain, and more study is called for to clarify our picture of the earliest occupants of our area. It may be reasonable to think that there may be many more Native American artifacts hiding in the soil of Georges Mills.

Sources:

- A New Look at an Old Lake, Howard R. Sargent and Evelyn A. Sargent, reissued with additional data of an article first published in *Monadnock Perspectives*, Vol 3, No. 3, Fall 1982.
- A Perspective on Prehistoric Sunapee, Howard R. Sargent, an article written for the Sunapee Historical Society.
- Howard Roy Sargent, 1922-1993: an obituary by George Nicholas, *American Antiquity*, 61(1), 1996, pp. 68-71; the Society for American Archaeology.

Gordon Ramspott: Gentleman and Friend.

For years Gordon supported our work through the activities of his beloved Janet, but after her passing a few years ago, he became an especially close friend to us. Almost every Monday afternoon found him joining us at Sunapee Archives where he helped us decipher old documents and identify photos and the people in them and searched his ever-sharp memory for details of our town's history. It was Gordon who encouraged us to buy one of our prized possessions from Sunapee's past—the grandfather clock with wooden clockworks that was built here in 1805. He was interested in whatever we were working on, and he kept us laughing with the stories he had to tell. He showed up for all our programs, too, and led the cheering for the 4th of July parade from the museum's doorway. We miss him!



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Thank you!

Sunapee Echoes

Sunapee Historical Society

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Georges Mills Harbor from Above